Warrant officer 255 series implementation

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Background

In the late 1990's the growth and implementation of technology at the tactical echelon created a vacuum of technical knowledge and support within these organizations. Reacting to the requirements of tactical and non-Signal unit commander's, the Signal Center created the 254A, Signal systems support technician, to serve as the single Signal technical expert within maneuver units. Primarily assessed from 25U's, the skill set and scope of the 254A was designed specifically to meet the needs of non-Signal organizations to include maneuver Signal operations, combat net radios, communications security, and Signal support to tactical operation centers. (See diagram 1)

However, in the mid 2000's the emphasis of information technology at the brigade level along with the transformation of the Army to a modular structure had a dramatic impact on the Signal warrant officer numbers, distribution, and purpose.

By placing both Military Occupational Specialty 250N and 254A in brigade combat teams, multi-functional support brigades, and other maneuver units, transformation essentially doubled Signal warrant officer numbers. Additionally the decentralization of systems and technology to the brigade level effectively forced the 254A to evolve from a CNR focused environment into one that is server based. The result of all these changes was that two MOS's were performing essentially the same functions while creating a gap in security and defense of our systems (i.e., MOS 251A and MOS 254A).

In organizations where both MOS 251A and 254A were assigned, the natural trend was for the 251A to focus on IA and some minor computer network defense tasks while the 254A focused on content management. However this was only applicable to a few fortunate organizations. Additionally this created a training issue for both MOS's. MOS 254A was not immersed in server systems to the extent of MOS 251A and MOS 251A was not adequately trained in computer network defense.

Repurposing the Signal Warrant Officer

As a result of the gaps, overlaps, and redundancy in certain elements of NetOps created by transformation, technology evolution, and emerging threats to our systems, a Military Occupational Classification and Structure action was created and is currently being implemented with a final effective date of 1 October 2012. The MOCS action was designed to specifically rebalance the Signal warrant officer relevance, structure, duties, and Average Grade Distribution Matrix while also addressing current gaps within NetOps.

The MOCS action (see Diagram 2) called for the repurposing of the Signal warrant officer MOS into two enlisted-level accessions (i.e., W1) through W4 MOS. One was designed to cover network management core competency. The other developed to cover our content management core competency, along with an MOS (W3 through W4 only) which will also be created to cover the network defense core competency. The MOCS action maintained the current W5 capper MOS while renaming it from senior Signal systems technician to senior network operations technician.

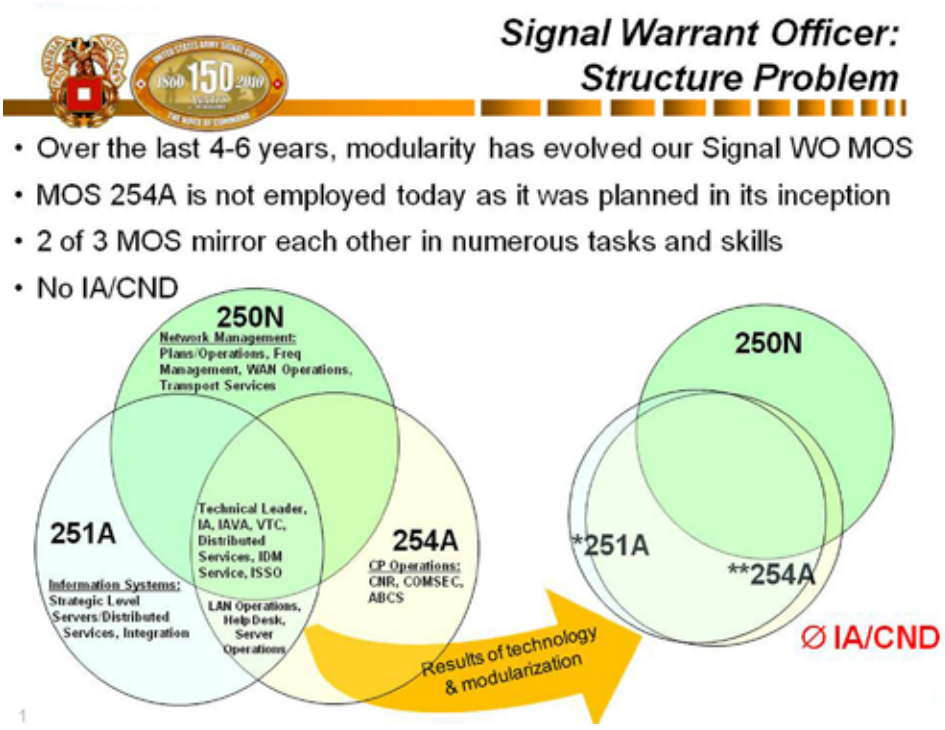

Diagram 1

The Military Occupational Classification System Action

First is the migration and combination of MOS 251A and 254A to the newly created 255A (information services technician) who is responsible for

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cyberspace content management. This action has already begun with the merging of our two Warrant Officer Basic and Warrant Officer Advance courses respectively) as well as changes in the prerequisites for accessions.

While MOS 254A was traditionally accessed from enlisted MOS 25U, the 255A prerequisites will be similar to the previous prerequisites for MOS 251A. The change in prerequisites is necessary to meet the role of the new MOS 255A and is not an attempt to exclude any particular MOS. Regardless of enlisted MOS, applicants must have content management (layer 7) type experience.

Merging these two MOS's into one that leverages the best of the two will create a warrant officer who is the true technical expert in information systems and services. Assignments for MOS 255A will begin at W2 in the S6 of BCTs and MFSBs, and then progress through division (W3) and corps (W4) to ASCC and joint (W4) positions. There are no active duty W1 positions.

Second is the migration of MOS 250N to 255N, network management technician. MOS 255N will serve as the Army's premier network transport technicians for voice, video, and data networks establishing and maintaining the transport layer environment of the Army's portion of the cyberspace domain through network management/enterprise systems management functions to include fault management, configuration management, auditing and accountability measures, maintaining performance standards, and implementing security measures at all levels in support of combat information superiority and command and control.

MOS 255N will begin at WO1 and conclude at CW4 and be responsible for cyberspace network management. Assignments for MOS 255N will begin at W2 in the S6 of BCTs and MFSBs, and then progress through division (W3) and corps (W4) to ASCC and joint (W4) positions.

The third change is the creation of MOS 255S, information protection technician. This change will provide commanders with a technician dedicated solely to the defense of systems as the warrant officer responsible for cyberspace defense. They will perform CND measures and advise IA functions to enable protection, detection, and reaction functions at all levels in support of combat information superiority. They will supervise and manage IA efforts, perform associated sub-elemental duties (e.g., CND), and enable non-lethal electronic protection efforts; they oversee associated personnel within the standards, transport, services, and applications layers of the network in order to achieve confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information, as well as the authentication and non-repudiation of users. MOS 255S will begin at CW3 and nominally access from MOS 255A and 255N.

As this new MOS matures, the Signal Regiment will meet its information and network protection requirements, close the gaps in our defenses, and provide a highly trained and highly competent cyberspace warrior adaptable for both cyberspace defense and offense. Assignments for MOS 255S will begin at W3 in the S6 of BCT (which will also place a senior warrant officer into the BCT S6 to mentor and further train the junior warrant officers) and progress through division (W4) and corps (W4) to ASCC and joint (W4) positions.

Fourth and finally is the name change of 255Z from senior Signal systems technician to senior network operations technician. MOS 255Z will remain as the Signal warrant officer capper MOS, serve exclusively at the grade of CW5, and function as the technical and tactical advisors for full spectrum network operations at any echelon of command or support activity of the U.S. Army or joint staff sections assigned to theater combatant commanders or allied armies. These officers provide leadership, guidance, technical input, and direction to subordinate elements, staff agencies, and field commanders up to and including theater Army level.

Additionally this MOCS action is also a grade plate roll down for Signal warrant officer authorizations. This action was necessary due to the AGDM for Signal warrant officers being distorted and way out of tolerance. (See diagram 3) Traditionally, the Regiment has had difficulty maintaining our W3 and W4 numbers.

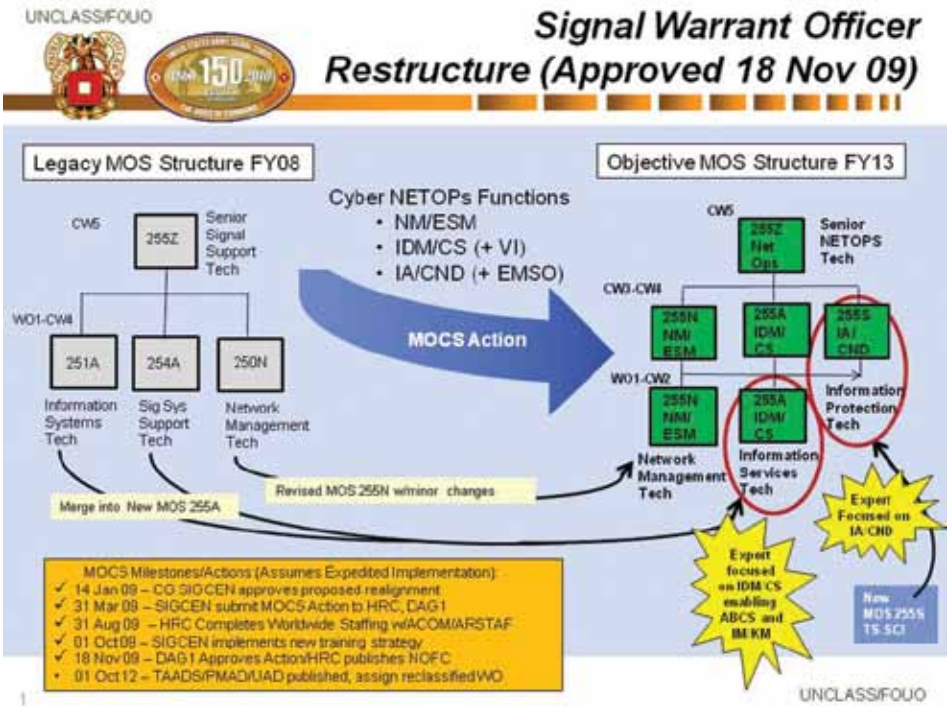

Diagram 2

The grade roll down will actually align us closer to our actual strength. Bottom line is the grade roll down and optimization of our AGMD will have neither an impact on our current population nor on future promotion potential. However it will allow for better utilization and development of our Signal warrant officers.

Where We Are Today

All of these changes will take effect no later than 1 October 2012, our intent is to expedite the action for full implementation in early FY12. Several changes have already begun. The prerequisites for MOS 251A and 254A have already changed and are now identical. Training for MOS 251A and 254A has been revised and merged into one class for WOBC and WOAC. Digital TOC and systems-of-systems experiential training is already implemented.

We are also working a plan with civilian industry to implement an intense, high-end, cyberspace security (i.e., CyD) qualification course for 255S and several pilot courses are being conducted. A minimum of 96 IA and COMSEC positions are being eliminated and will shift to MOS 255S.

The Way Ahead

This is a fairly substantial action that will impact our entire population. With such comprehensive changes, some smaller elements of the action may miss the mark. Glitches with the MOCS action were expected and some have already been identified and vetted throughout the process. Upon completion and full implementation of the MOCS action there will be a series of ensuing actions to fine-tune the changes. Some positions may require additional changes while others may be added. We also anticipate changes in our W5 structure as well as growth on 255S requirements.

Conclusion

While this action is not the conclusive solution to the Signal warrant officer structure, it is a major enhancement that will strengthen the relevance and capabilities of our Signal warrant officers. It will provide commanders, G6s, S6s, and other senior leaders with a powerful team of well-trained, seasoned Signal warrant officers who are essential to successful network-enabled war fighting operations.

Optimal Signal Warrant Officer AGDM
27 CW5
105 CW4
194 CW3
460 CW2

Current Signal Warrant Officer AGDM
16 CW5
159 CW4
268 CW3
396 CW2

Diagram 3

CW4 William Winkler *is currently assigned as the Signal Regiment warrant officer personnel developer (Proponent) at SCOE, Fort Gordon, GA. His previous assignments include 1st ID, 2nd ID, 3rd ID, 82nd Airborne Division, 35th Signal Brigade, Joint Communications Unit, and the Asymmetric Warfare Group. CW4 Winkler has multiple deployments and overseas assignments to include Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, Bosnia, Korea, and Germany. He is a graduate of Basic Airborne course, Air Assault Course, SERE, Army Force Management Course, and Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course. CW4 Winkler holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland, College Park in Information Systems, and a Master of Science degree in Information Technology Management from Touro University. He has 25 years of military service with 14 years as a warrant officer.*

ACRONYM QuickScan

AGDM – Average Grade Distribution Matrix
BCT – Brigade Combat Team
CM – Content Management
CND – Computer Network Defense
CNR – Combat Net Radios
COMSEC – Communications Security
CyCM – Cyberspace Content Management
CyD – Cyberspace Defense
CyNM – Cyberspace Network Management
ESM – Enterprise Systems Management
IA – Information Assurance
IT – Information technology
MOCS – Military Occupational Classification and Structure
MOS – Military Occupational Specialty
MFSB – Multi-Functional Support Brigades
ND – Network Defense
NetOps – Network Operations
NM – Network Management
SoS – Systems-of-Systems
TOC – Tactical Operation Centers
WOAC – Warrant Officer Advance Course
WOBC – Warrant Officer Basic Course